



- English Version -

Stellungnahme zum Status und
der zukünftigen Entwicklung des
Rates für Sozial- und Wirtschafts-
daten (RatSWD), Berlin

**Science-Policy Statement
on the Status and Future Development of the
German Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD), Berlin**

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Preface

In July 2007, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) asked the German Council of Science and Humanities to develop recommendations concerning the scientific infrastructure in German humanities and social sciences (including economics). In this context, the German Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD), Berlin, was also supposed to be evaluated.

As the recommendations of the working group on “Infrastructure for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities” are only expected to come in the second half of 2010 and as future funding arrangements for the RatSWD need to be decided before that date, the German Council of Science and Humanities asked its evaluation committee to conduct the appraisal of the current status and future development perspectives of the RatSWD before the report of the overarching working group is endorsed. In March 2009 the evaluation committee established a separate working group for this purpose. This group visited the RatSWD on April 16 and 17, 2009, and subsequently composed an evaluation report based on this visit and the information submitted by the RatSWD. On the basis of the report of the working group, the evaluation committee of the German Council of Science and Humanities, during its meeting of October 5, 2009, drafted a science-policy statement concerning the RatSWD in the larger context of German research and higher education policies.

The working group partly consisted of external experts who are not members of the German Council of Science and Humanities. The Council is particularly indebted to these experts and everyone who was involved in collecting and reviewing the data. The German Council of Science and Humanities adopted these recommendations on November 13, 2009.

A. Parameters

The German Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD) is an independent, body of selected experts the members of which are appointed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in consultation with the other federal ministries. The Founding Committee of the RatSWD assumed its work in 2001 on the basis of recommendations by the Commission to Improve the Informational Infrastructure between the Scientific Community and Official Statistics (*Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik*, KVI).⁵ The constitutive session of the RatSWD took place on November 1, 2004. The RatSWD is assisted in its work by a business office located on the premises of DIW Berlin (the German Institute for Economic Research).

The RatSWD is financed by the BMBF, with funding in the form of third-party funds administrated by the DIW. The average annual budget for the current funding period (September 2008 to February 2011) amounts to 556,000 euros. This includes 190,000 euros per annum for the staff of the business office, 232,000 euros for expert report competitions, workshops, and conferences, 23,000 euros for travel expenses of RatSWD members and the staff of the business office, and 30,000 euros in overheads for the DIW Berlin. In addition, annual costs of 37,000 euros are incurred for renting office space from the DIW Berlin. In addition to that, the 4th Conference for Social and Economic Data (*Konferenz für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten*, KSWD), held in 2008, and a project entitled *Developing the Research Infrastructure for the Social and Behavioral Sciences in Germany and Beyond: Progress Since 2001, Current Situation, and Future Demands* (Working title: KVI Updated) received funding of approx. 380,000 euros from the BMBF from 2008 to 2009.

The twelve members of the RatSWD receive no financial compensation for their work.

The BMBF provides funding for 3.74 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in the business office of the RatSWD. This includes the full-time managing director, one part-time research assistant, one part-time team assistant and three part-time student aides. Since 2008, the RatSWD has also employed three part-time contract workers

⁵ Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik (Ed.): *Wege zu einer besseren informationellen Infrastruktur*, Baden-Baden 2001.

including one scientific assistant to the managing director and two non-scientific support staff.

B. Core Tasks

The expert report of the KVI contains a basic description of the future work profile of the RatSWD. In particular, the commission recommended that the RatSWD should address the following tasks:⁶

- Provide a systematic appraisal of the German informational infrastructure and formulate recommendations concerning its future development;
- Advance the quality of social and economic data and boost the monitoring of German society, taking European harmonisation and the results of structure reports within Europe into account;
- Offer advice and recommendations for the establishment and work of Research Data Centers (*Forschungsdatenzentren*, RDCs) and Data Service Centers (*Datenservicezentren*, DSCs);
- Suggest relevant research infrastructures for funding.

The Conference for Social and Economic Data, held every two years, at which participants elect the scientific representatives of the RatSWD, may elaborate further guidelines for the RatSWD's work. The RatSWD currently considers its main fields of activity to be:

- Supporting the strategic planning of research infrastructures;
- Promoting better access to data;
- Promoting research in survey methodology;
- Contributing to capacity-building (particularly among young scholars).

C. Role in the Development of the Informational Infrastructure

In the relatively short period of its existence, the RatSWD has successfully implemented many of the improvements and changes proposed by the KVI and thus made a considerable contribution to improving scientific potential and research conditions in the empirical social and economic sciences over the past few years. Before the RatSWD was established, there was no platform in Germany for advancing the fur-

⁶ Ibid. see p. 25/26 and p. 293.

ther development of the data infrastructure with targeted involvement of both data providers and researchers at the same time. The successful self-coordination of a number of social science disciplines may serve as a positive example for similar endeavours in other areas of infrastructure planning.

The RatSWD plays a central role especially in expanding scientific researchers' access to microdata from official statistics agencies. In this context, the founding of RDCs, as promoted by the KVI, the founding committee of the RatSWD, and the RatSWD itself, in cooperation with official statistics agencies and sponsors, is judged by the German Council of Science and Humanities to be a particularly noteworthy success. In this field, a dynamic development is currently to be observed, which will continue in the medium term. By setting up common standards, providing support in the approaching of sponsors in a coordinated way and by giving a case-by-case assessment of project applications, the RatSWD also performs an important coordinating function. Moreover, it represents the interests of the data users, among others through its commitment to prevent prohibitive fee models and through promoting quick data access. The number and quality of publications by external researchers based on data from the RDCs is following a very positive growth trend. The support provided by the RatSWD for the development of the RDCs will also be vital in the foreseeable future. In particular, this support is essential to guarantee a reliable financial and legal basis for the RDCs.

The development of DSCs also proposed by the KVI all in all has been less successful to date. The RatSWD recognised the need to be proactive in this area and developed proposals for further conceptual development of the DSCs. Furthermore, the German Council of Science and Humanities deems an unbiased discussion on the future role and strategic focus of the DSCs by the RatSWD and other relevant institutions to be desirable.

In addition to establishing the RDCs and DSCs, the RatSWD serves as an important platform for communication between data users and data providers. Since the RatSWD was founded, a large number of expert hearings have been conducted and strategic questions concerning the further development of the data infrastructure have been addressed in a number of working groups and within the framework of conferences and workshops. These have made a clear contribution both to raising awareness about the need for data-related research infrastructures in various disci-

plines and to working out specific solutions. However, the German Council of Science and Humanities takes a critical view of the fact that the RatSWD's publication strategy and choice of topics for the expert report competitions, which are cost-intensive in relation to the overall budget, are not always directly relevant to general issues of strategic further development of the data infrastructure.

Another essential contribution to the further development of the research infrastructure in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences is the stocktaking currently being carried out within the framework of the project "KVI Updated". The project, aiming to provide a detailed, multidisciplinary overview of the present situation and future opportunities for developing the research infrastructure landscape in the social and behavioural sciences, has the potential to provide essential stimuli to improve the research environments in question.

A successful stocktaking process would also support the RatSWD's claim to play an appropriate role in future general research infrastructure planning. However, in the RatSWD's current form and with its present staff levels, it cannot feasibly provide a comprehensive comparative evaluation of research infrastructure projects in the relevant disciplines owing to the lack of representation of policy makers, the still incomplete representation of the social and behavioural science disciplines, and the focus on research infrastructures in the area of data collection and dissemination (and thus on a subset of all research infrastructures).

Over the past few years, the RatSWD has significantly increased its commitment to promoting young scholars and to teaching. In addition to expert report competitions for young scholars, this also includes workshops for training young scholars in data analysis and the development of a teaching module on research ethics and data protection. Against the backdrop of scarce human and financial resources, it seems necessary for the council to concentrate on strategic tasks in the structural development of the data infrastructure. The RatSWD should therefore endeavour to encourage other bodies to continue the initiative already underway to promote young scholars and teaching.

The RatSWD plays an increasingly important role in securing the quality of official statistical data collection. Here, the very existence of the council has been having an increasingly positive impact. In particular, data providers have been made aware that

public funds should be used to make collected data accessible to the scientific community swiftly and in a user-friendly way. In addition to establishing these informal standards, the RatSWD has been increasingly successful in passing on its expertise right from the planning stage of the data collection and thus in increasing the scientific usability of the collected data. This is illustrated, for instance, by the appointment of members of the RatSWD for the German Census Commission 2011.

In the interest of quality assurance of projects in the field of data infrastructure, it is also to be welcomed that before funding relevant research infrastructure projects, research funding bodies (in particular the BMBF) obtain reports from the RatSWD. In the light of this, it is not necessary for the RatSWD to also act as a funding agency itself in the future.

At an international level, the RatSWD maintains contacts with the few institutions responsible for carrying out similar tasks, and observes their activities. Within the European Union, with involvement of members of the RatSWD, the *European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures* (ESFRI) has contributed to intensifying national and EU research infrastructure planning. The German Council of Science and Humanities encourages the RatSWD to also actively promote international coordination activities outside Europe. For example, it could provide new stimuli in the framework of the *International Data Forum* (IDF) established in 2007.

Important areas at the national level requiring more attention from the RatSWD in future are long-term archiving of social science data, increasing the availability of qualitative data, and monitoring of German society. Greater use should be made of existing opportunities for cooperating with other institutions (e.g., the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, GESIS, or agencies conducting large-scale surveys).

D. Organisation and Resources

The RatSWD consists of six elected members representing different disciplines in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences and of six appointed representatives from the data providers⁷. Elections of the user representatives are held bi-annually at the Conference for Social and Economic Data. Re-election is possible only once. Se-

⁷ The following data providing institutions each nominate one representative: the Federal Statistical Office, the Statistical Offices of the Länder, the Institute for Employment Research or the German Federal Employment Agency, one institution representing the German social security system, one institution that has either a Research Data Center or a Data Service Center, one other data providing institution.

ven professional associations from the relevant disciplines⁸ are entitled to make proposals, while other professional associations may be granted right of proposal through a majority vote at the conference. A group of ten persons entitled to vote can also nominate a candidate. The election regulations have proven to be appropriate so far. However, the German Council of Science and Humanities welcomes the changes planned by the RatSWD so as to make it possible to take into account a larger number of data providers in the future and to allow a broader representation of different disciplines.

The RatSWD must convene at least twice per year, but usually holds four to five scheduled meetings. It elects a chairperson and a deputy chairperson from among its own ranks. Despite the considerable demands in terms of time investment placed on the chairpersons of the council, there currently is no teaching buy-out relieving them of their teaching duties.

The RatSWD's human and financial resources have been adequate during the development phase. Accommodating the council at the DIW Berlin is not sustainable in the medium term, however, since the mere impression of external influence must be avoided and moving to new premises seems to be feasible at an acceptable cost.

E. Statement and Recommendations

The RatSWD's key tasks are of an open-ended nature, of considerable significance for the research potential of the German social, economic and behavioural sciences, and should be continued to be carried out accordingly. This means that in the medium term the present project funding must be replaced by institutional funding. Overall, the RatSWD has by far exceeded all expectations and is in a position to continue to make a vital contribution to the development of the research infrastructure landscape in the mentioned disciplines. It has brought about a lasting improvement in the access to official statistics agencies' microdata and assumed essential coordinating and platform functions in the further development of the research infrastructure landscape.

⁸ German Society for Political Science, German Association for Political Science, German Psychological Society, German Sociological Association, German Statistical Society, Social Policy Association, German Academic Association for Business Research.

There is no significant overlap with the fields of activity of other institutions. Therefore, it is recommended that the RatSWD's funding should be extended for another six years with a view to subsequent permanent funding of the institution.

In view of the future development and permanent institutionalisation of the RatSWD, the following recommendations aim at strengthening the council in its core tasks:

- Sharpening the profile of tasks: After some of the original tasks have been at least partially completed, the RatSWD should define its future core tasks in a new *Mission Statement*. Core functions that should be included in such a document are, among other things, the RatSWD's platform function and coordinating function, its role in representing the interests of both data users and data providers, its various advisory functions, its activities in setting standards and evaluating the work of RDCs and DSCs, as well as its role as a common point of contact for these centres, its involvement in the strategic planning of the data infrastructure, its role in the assessment of individual projects, and finally its role in the development of a European and international data infrastructure.
- Focus: The redefined profile should serve to tighten the focus of the RatSWD's activities. Financial and human resources should be concentrated on the core tasks directly derived from this. All these core tasks are directly related to the strategic structural development of the data infrastructure. Derived tasks, particularly in the field of teaching and promotion of young scholars and in the field of publishing research results, that are not directly relevant to the strategic development of the research infrastructure, should be passed on or discontinued.
- Inclusion of new types of data and new data sources: In the course of focusing on the strategic development of the data infrastructure, the RatSWD should increasingly include in its activities data types not previously considered or only considered peripherally. This applies particularly to qualitative data, geographic data, data from economic research institutes, administrative and commercial transaction data, public-health data, and data relevant to psychology und educational research.
- Broadening of the disciplinary basis: The opening to additional types of data should be a means of mobilising new disciplines for active cooperation in the RatSWD. This refers both to colleagues of the already represented disciplines working with qualitative data and to other disciplines such as social geography, health research or educational research. The RatSWD should step up its efforts to

actively make its relevance to these disciplines known. If it succeeds in broadening the range of disciplines involved, the RatSWD will be able to argue with even more conviction in future that it is speaking on behalf of all the social, economic, and possibly behavioural sciences in the field of data infrastructure. This is the prerequisite for strengthening the RatSWD's political role. Accordingly, the RatSWD should not wait for the needs of these fields to be articulated, but instead take the initiative and make suggestions concerning the further development of the data infrastructure so as to stimulate discussion about possible research infrastructures needed in other disciplines.

- Further development of Research Data Centers: The dynamics of the establishment of new RDCs require particular attention from the RatSWD. Here, considerable efforts to integrate and coordinate must be made in future in order to guarantee the continuous quality of data provision. The RatSWD should carry on lending its support to quick, user-friendly, and open data access and the avoidance of prohibitive fee models. In the light of this, devising sustainable models of funding is a top priority. The RatSWD should further increase its efforts to establish the label "Research Data Center" as a mark of quality for those institutions that meet the standards of the council.
- Internationalisation: The RatSWD should engage more actively at an international level and, apart from internationalising its own activities to a larger extent, play a facilitating role in the internationalisation strategies of RDCs and DSCs. Within the European Union, the RatSWD should act as an antenna for important infrastructure developments and represent the interests of German data providers and users effectively. The objective should be to constantly improve both international researchers' access to German data and German researchers' access to data collected abroad.
- Future funding and institutionalisation: Due to the long-term nature of the RatSWD's tasks, a more far-reaching institutionalisation and permanent funding of the institution is recommended. Since it is not feasible to implement the recommendations on conceptual development and take the necessary decisions concerning future funding in the remaining year of the current funding period, the German Council of Science and Humanities recommends a further funding phase of six years with the objective of developing a clear institutional perspective and a long-term funding model based on this by the fourth year, at the latest. With this end in mind, the RatSWD should coordinate its activities with other relevant bodies

in the research and higher education system and explore both solutions that involve affiliation with or integration into existing larger institutions and solutions that aim at the RatSWD continued existence as an independent body. Although the RatSWD's human and financial resources and its business office have been adequate during the development phase, a corresponding gradual increase in funds should be planned for the expansion of its range of tasks and its disciplinary representation (for example, along with an increase in the size of the RatSWD). At the same time, the above-mentioned focus on the core tasks must be adhered to.

- Future location: The location at the DIW Berlin should be given up for a more neutral environment reflecting the RatSWD's independence from other institutions.
- Future mandate: In the case of a permanent institutionalisation of the RatSWD, it is recommended that members of the council are in future to be appointed by the federal government so as to ensure that the recommendations are more binding.
- Strengthening of relations with other relevant bodies in the research and higher education system and with data providers of official statistics: Irrespective of the type of permanent institutionalisation opted for, the RatSWD should further develop its relations with other political and funding bodies in the research and higher education system. In particular, the RatSWD should decide on an individual basis whether permanent seats in the RatSWD should be offered to other institutions. The RatSWD should also expand its institutional function within official statistics. Inclusion in the preparations for the Census 2011 is a trend-setting example of how this may be done.
- Organisational adjustment: In order to do justice to the increased number of data providers and to the desirable expansion of the disciplinary basis, the RatSWD should adapt its structure and election regulations. A permanent committee of representatives of all RDCs and DSCs should be established at the RatSWD and be represented within the council. The council's period of office should be extended to three years with the possibility of being re-elected once. Electoral procedures should be adapted to ensure a broad disciplinary representation. In the light of this, the German Council of Science and Humanities welcomes the RatSWD's plans to increase the number of its members to 16. A teaching buy-out to relieve the chairperson and deputy chairperson from teaching duties during their period of office is recommended.

The German Council of Science and Humanities reserves itself the right to make further recommendations on the RatSWD's role within the research infrastructure landscape and the RatSWD's further development in its upcoming overarching recommendations on "Infrastructure for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities."

The German Council of Science and Humanities asks the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to also report on the RatSWD's further development in the context of the overarching recommendations on the infrastructure for research in the social sciences and humanities.

Attachment

Statement on the Status and Future Development of the German Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD), Berlin

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Preface

The present evaluation report on the status and future development of the German Council of Social and Economic Data, Berlin, is divided into two parts. For the descriptive part, the institution has approved the factual accuracy of the final version. The evaluation part reports the assessment of the scientific performance, structures, and organisational characteristics.

A. Description of Institution

A.I. Historical Development

Beginning in the 1970s, there have been a number of attempts by German social scientists to render data collected by public bodies such as the national and state-level statistical offices and other government institutions more accessible to scientific inquiry.⁹ Although these early efforts met with partial success, access to official statistical data remained laborious and costly.

In the second half of the 1990s an increasing number of social scientists renewed these efforts and proposed the strategic development of the German data infrastructure for the social and economic sciences. Notable examples of such recommendations include one memorandum by Wolfgang Zapf signed by 38 co-signatories¹⁰ and one memorandum by Richard Hauser, Gert G. Wagner, and Klaus F. Zimmermann¹¹ both urging closer collaboration between public data providers and scientific users. Supported by representatives of official statistics,¹² these efforts prompted the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*, BMBF) to appoint the Commission to Improve the Statistical Infrastructure in Cooperation with the Scientific Community and Official Statistics (*Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik*, KVI). The central concern of this commission was to improve the relationship between academic research and official statistics. The commission, in its final 2001 report, provided a comprehensive overview of the landscape of data provision in Germany covering official statistics agencies, ministries and governmental research agencies (*Ressortforschungseinrichtungen*), and data providers under academic direction. It also offered information about modern data infrastructures in relevant comparison countries. On this basis, the commission developed 36 recommendations.¹³ These prominently include the establishment of the Council for Social and

9 Grohmann, H.; Bürgin, G.; Krupp, H.-J.; Verbockett, W.: Podiumsdiskussion zum Thema: Vielseitige Nutzung statistischer Einzelangaben und Datenschutz, in: Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv, 64 (1980), p. 39-75.

Krupp, H.-J.: Möglichkeiten der Verbesserung der Einkommens- und Vermögensstatistik, in: Schriften der Kommission für wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Wandel, 50 (1975).

10 Zapf, W.: Memorandum zur Verbesserung der Zugangsmöglichkeiten zu Mikrodaten der amtlichen Statistik, in: ZUMA-Nachrichten, 39 (1996), p. 172-175.

11 Hauser, R.; Wagner, G. G.; Zimmermann, K. F.: Erfolgsbedingungen empirischer Wirtschaftsforschung und empirisch gestützter wirtschafts- und sozialpolitischer Beratung. Ein Memorandum, in: Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv, 82 (1998), p. 369-379.

12 Hahlen, J.: Amtliche Statistik als zentraler Teil der statistischen Infrastruktur. Anmerkungen zum Memorandum, in: Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv, 82 (1998), p. 387-390.

13 Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik (Ed.): Wege zu einer besseren informationellen Infrastruktur. Gutachten der vom Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung eingesetzten Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik, Baden-Baden 2001.

Economic Data (*Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten*, RatSWD) which should integrally involve experts both in data collection and in data use in creating a modern data infrastructure.

The recommendations were taken up by the BMBF and, still in 2001, the Founding Committee of the RatSWD (*Gründungsausschuss des RatSWD*) was convened. In the three years of its existence – from 2001 to 2004 – the founding committee recommended the establishment of four Research Data Centers (*Forschungsdatenzentren*, RDCs) and two Data Service Centers (*Datenservicezentren*, DSCs). It also prepared the 1st Conference for Social and Economic Data (*Konferenz für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten*, KSWD) in January 2003. The main goal of this conference was to bring together data providers with scientific users of official statistical data, data collected under the direction of ministries and governmental research agencies, and survey data collected under academic direction. It involved extensive discussions of the thematic, methodological, and legal questions related to the use of such data. The founding committee also organised the 2nd Conference for Social and Economic Data in June 2004. Over and above the continuation of the discussions of the first conference, this meeting prepared the establishment of the RatSWD by electing nominees for half of the council seats. The BMBF funded both the work of the founding committee and the two conferences. The constitutive meeting of the RatSWD took place on 1 November 2004.

Almost since the beginning, the RatSWD has been supported in its work by its business office. The BMBF has granted the RatSWD and its business office initial funding for six years, that is, until February 2011. The funding for the RatSWD is provided in a form similar to a third-party project fund of the German Institute for Economic Research (*Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung*, DIW) in Berlin.

The RatSWD was established as an independent body of appointed experts with the role of an advisory commission for the federal government and the core task of improving the informational infrastructure of data collection and scientific research. Members of the council are appointed for a 2-year term. A group of new members was appointed on 28 November 2008. The RatSWD is currently in its third and – under the current funding arrangements – final term.

A.II. Core Tasks

The report of the KVI set out the broad framework for the future work of the RatSWD. In particular, the commission concluded that the RatSWD should address the following tasks:¹⁴

- Provide a systematic appraisal of the German informational infrastructure and formulate recommendations concerning its future development;
- Advance the quality of social and economic data and the continuous monitoring of German society while taking increasing European harmonization and the results of EU-wide structure reports into account;
- Offer advice for the establishment and regular assessment of the operation of Research Data Centers and Data Service Centers;
- Suggest relevant research infrastructure for funding.

These tasks have been further specified in a mission statement worked out by the founding committee, which outlines the tasks of the RatSWD as follows:

- Make recommendations to improve data access through the founding and evaluation of Research Data Centers and Data Service Centers;
- Make recommendations for the improvement of data use through the provision of relevant documentation and the preparation of scientific and statistical data (research data portal, metadata);
- Provide advice to research institutions and organisations on the infrastructure for data-based research and teaching;
- Recommend research themes and activities promoting the development of the data infrastructure;
- Make recommendations for more effective collection and provision of data relevant to research;
- Advise the federal ministry responsible for research and the corresponding *Länder* (state) level government agencies in further developing the research-based data infrastructure;
- Advise public (official and academic) and private data collectors;

¹⁴ Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik (Ed.): Wege zu einer besseren informationellen Infrastruktur, Baden-Baden 2001, p. 25/26 and p. 293.

- Advise data providers on the process of obtaining official recognition as a scientific research institution (certification) in cases where there is no existing institutional affiliation with an independent research organisation;
- Organise and conduct the Conference for Social and Economic Data.

The Conference for Social and Economic Data may formulate further guidelines for RatSWD's work. The RatSWD currently considers its main areas of work to be

- Encouraging strategic planning by research infrastructure providers;
- Promoting better access to data;
- Promoting research in survey methodology;
- Capacity-building (particularly among young scholars).

A.III. National and International Position

The RatSWD was founded because the KVI observed that there was no institutionalised body to establish an on-going dialogue between large-scale collectors of statistical and register data and researchers (users) in the social and economic sciences. Because of this, the RatSWD considers itself as being singular in addressing the core tasks outlined above and in providing a meeting ground for all stakeholders. Indeed, the council claims a unique position although it acknowledges that there is a partial overlap between its own work and the work of institutions such as the German Research Foundation. The RatSWD maintains that improving the interface between such institutions and the RatSWD would help to eliminate existing redundancies and to find comprehensive and efficient solutions for existing problems.

At the international level, there are some similar initiatives designated to developing the informational infrastructure of the social and economic sciences. These prominently include the *UK Data Forum*, the *Canadian Research Data Strategy Working Group*, the *Swedish Data Base Infrastructure Committee*, the *Australian National Committee for Data in Science*, the *European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures* (ESFRI), the *Founding Committee of the International Data Forum*, and, in part, the *Open Access Initiative* of the OECD. The RatSWD observes these activities and links up with them. The RatSWD's chair is represented in the *International Data Forum*, the aim of which is to facilitate and to coordinate the international collection and sharing of data for research in the social sciences.

A.IV. Work Areas

In line with the KVI recommendations, the main objective of the RatSWD is to improve the research infrastructure of the social and economic sciences in Germany, in order to enhance their international competitiveness. To this end, it aims at stimulating and facilitating a constructive dialogue between the research community, data providing institutions (official statistics as well as ministries and governmental research agencies), and policy makers. The focal areas of work include encouraging the strategic planning of research infrastructures, promoting data access and research into survey methodology, and building capacities within the research community in general and among young researchers in particular.

The main target audiences of the RatSWD are

- Data providers;
- Researchers at universities, universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), non-university research institutions, and governmental research agencies (*Resortforschungseinrichtungen*);
- Research teams in NGOs (e.g., employers' associations and trade unions);
- Research funding organisations and bodies concerned with higher education policies (the latter include policy makers);
- The interested public.

IV.1. Encouraging Strategic Planning of Research Infrastructures

One of the central tasks of the RatSWD as defined by the KVI recommendations is to systematically evaluate the German informational infrastructure and to formulate recommendations for its future development. To this end, the council engages in a number of activities.

a) Expert Hearings

From its establishment in 2004 up to now, the RatSWD has interviewed a total of 21 experts. These experts elaborated on data demands and data problems in fields such as demographic studies, media studies, criminology, economics, and educational science. There were also hearings dealing with access to health data, access to data of the Higher Education Information System (*Hochschul-Informationssystem*, HIS, an institute providing statistical data on the higher education system), access to

the German Federal Bank's business and financial market data, and access to the business and personal data of the KfW banking group (*KfW Bankengruppe*).

The main goal of these hearings was to develop strategic ideas for the improvement of the research infrastructure in areas not at the centre of the RatSWD members' own expertise.

b) Working Groups

In one case, a hearing was followed up by a dedicated working group (based on a workshop titled "Data Problems in the Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice" on 27 October 2006). In 2007, the RatSWD appointed a subcommittee on "Crime Statistics and Criminal Justice Statistics". This twelve-person group met four times and conducted a workshop called "What we'd like to know: Crime statistics in an international perspective" (*Was wüssten wir gern? Kriminalstatistiken im Lichte internationaler Erfahrungen*). The results of the working group will be published in a book format and will be jointly presented by the German Federal Minister of Justice, the head of the working group, and a delegation of the RatSWD. The current Federal Minister of Justice has agreed to write an introduction to the book.

The RatSWD plans to establish three more working groups in the near future (on mortality register data, geo-coded spatial data, and innovative data dissemination strategies).

c) Workshops and Conferences

Some of the workshops and conferences organised or co-hosted by the RatSWD focused on strategic questions concerning research infrastructure developments.

The bi-annual "Conference for Social and Economic Data" has a relatively broad perspective and aims to discuss general strategic developments and the overall performance of the social and economic sciences in an interdisciplinary setting. Four of such KSWD conferences have been held so far.

The more topic-focused "Dialogue Workshops" bring together a variety of stakeholders (data providers, data users, political actors) to discuss data collection strategies, improve access to and use of data, and to promote the quality of data available in Germany. So far, these workshops have covered the following topics:

- The Influence of the Scientific Community on the Compilation of Official Statistics with the 2010/2011 Census as Example;
- A Dialogue between the Sciences and Official Statistics on the Survey Programme of the Official Household Sample in Germany;
- Foreign Trade in Times of Globalization: The Possibilities and Limitations of Statistical Measurements.

d) “KVI Updated” and Roadmap Planning

The RatSWD considers the development of strategic planning efforts towards a research infrastructure roadmap as a regular task. The RatSWD does not aim to establish itself as a central planner, but intends to act as a forum for strategic discussions between different data providers and funding agencies (e.g., official statistics, ministries and governmental research agencies, the Leibniz Association [*Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, WGL], and the German Research Foundation [*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, DFG]).

The first step of such an endeavour must be to establish what infrastructures are currently available.¹⁵ The BMBF-funded project “Developing the Research Infrastructure for the Social and Behavioral Sciences in Germany and Beyond: Progress Since 2001, Current Situation, and Future Demands” (working title: “KVI Updated”) is intended to provide a reliable and up-to-date overview of the general situation and the specific areas in which further developments are required. In the planned book resulting from this project, approximately 50 expert reports will describe the recent progress and future needs with respect to the national and international research data infrastructure. This overview should provide a better basis for policy makers and data providers to make decisions on data infrastructure developments at both the national and international level. The RatSWD intends to play a coordinating and leadership role in this discussion process. In the midterm, these efforts should allow the development of a roadmap for the future German research data infrastructure landscape.

¹⁵ A first effort of such an appraisal can be seen in: Solga, H.; Wagner, G. G.: A modern statistical infrastructure for excellent research and policy advice. Report on the German Council for Social and Economic Data during its first period in office (2004 - 2006), in: Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten: Working Paper, 2, Berlin 2007.

e) Membership in Relevant Bodies

The RatSWD's members are also engaged with the strategic development of the German and international research infrastructure by contributing to other relevant bodies working in this area.

After an update of the Federal Statistical Law (*Bundesstatistikgesetz*), the RatSWD holds a seat on the Advisory Board (*Statistischer Beirat*) to the German Federal Statistical Office. Further, the Federal Minister of the Interior (*Bundesminister des Innern*) appointed the Scientific Advisory Board for the Census 2011 after officially consulting the RatSWD.

Members of RatSWD serve on the Founding Committee of the International Data Forum, the OECD Open Access Initiative, and the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures.

IV.2. Promoting Data Access and Data Quality

A second central aim of the RatSWD is to increase access to microdata, particularly by recommending and continuously evaluating RDCs and DSCs. Increasingly, the RatSWD does not only focus on making existing data accessible but also makes efforts to achieve a sustainable improvement in data quality by promoting intensified research efforts in survey methodology.

a) Research Data Centers and Data Service Centers

The Founding Committee of the RatSWD and the RatSWD itself have recommended the establishment of four RDCs and two DSCs (see Table 1).

Table 1: Recommendations on RDCs and DSCs

Data Centre	Date of Evaluation by Founding Committee of the RatSWD or RatSWD itself	Period of Partial Funding by the BMBF	Current Financing
Research Data Center of the Federal Statistical Office	25 June 2004	1/9/2002 – 31/3/2008	Federal Statistical Office
Research Data Center of the Statistical Offices of the Länder	12/13 October 2006	1/1/2004 – 30/6/2007 1/7/2007 – 31/12/2009	Partial Funding by the BMBF
Research Data Center of the Federal Employment Agency at the Institute for Labor Market and Occupation Research IAB	20/21 April 2006	1/12/2003 – 30/11/2006	Federal Employment Agency
Research Data Center of the German Pension Insurance	30 June and 1 July 2005	1/12/2003 – 31/12/2006 1/1/2007 – 30/11/2008	German Pension Insurance
Service Center for Microdata (GML) of the German Social Science Infrastructure Service (GESIS)	2/3 April 2006	1/7/2003 – 31/12/2006 1/1/2008 – 31/12/2009	Partial Funding by the BMBF
International Data Service Center of the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA)	20/21 February 2007	1/11/2003 – 31/3/2007 1/3/2008 – 28/2/2010	Partial Funding by the BMBF

Source: German Council for Social and Economic Data

The RatSWD advises and assesses the operation of the existing RDCs and DSCs on a regular basis. It established minimum standards of good practice for such institutions in early 2007.¹⁶ Two further RDCs have adopted these standards: The RDC of the Institute for Educational Progress (*Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen*, IQB) and the RDC of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (*Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung*, BiBB). It is expected that more centres will follow (e.g., an RDC associated with the National Educational Panel Study, NEPS).

The RatSWD regards the establishment of criteria for RDCs as an important milestone and believes that overseeing and evaluating the practice of existing RDCs and integrating new RDCs into the existing infrastructure will remain a long-term task. The major challenges concerning the continuing development of RDCs are, according to the council, to assure reliable funding and to achieve a sound legal basis. Up to now, only the RDCs of the IAB and of the German Pension Insurance (*Deutsche*

¹⁶ Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten (Ed.): The German Council for Social and Economic Data: Criteria for Research Data Centers (Kriterien des Rates für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten für Forschungsdatenzentren), Berlin 2007.

Rentenversicherung) are securely funded (see Table 1). And the legal basis, particularly as far as the federal and state-level statistical offices are concerned, is unclear because they are a part of the public administration without official “research goals”. However, a legislative procedure is on its way which may change this situation. In addition, the RatSWD is currently in a discussion process about a new type of data service centre focusing on research themes rather than single data sets.

The RatSWD is in discussions with lawmakers and the ministries hoping that such specific research goals for public statistical offices will be included in further amendments of relevant laws.

An evaluation conducted at the beginning of 2009 by a specialised consulting firm connected to the Social Science Research Center Berlin (*Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, WZB*) revealed an increase in the number of projects carried out on the basis of RDC data from about 114 in 2004 to 411 projects four years later. In the same period, the number of third-party funded research projects rose from 41 to 138. There was a parallel increase in the number and quality of publications based on RDC data. The overall number of publications increased from 141 articles and books in 2004 to more than 300 in 2008. The number of peer-reviewed journal articles increased from 19 in 2004 to 59 in 2007.

b) Projects in Survey Methodology

The BMBF has repeatedly asked for RatSWD recommendations on funding decisions for projects concerning data access and methodological developments in the social and economic sciences. The RatSWD sees this as indication of its success and growing reputation and believes that it constitutes an opportunity for sustainable improvements in the quality of available data. Table 1 summarises the projects for which recommendations have been issued. In total, the RatSWD has recommended funding amounting to approx. 4.4 million euros.

Table 2: Methodological Projects Recommended for Funding

Project Title	Amount of Grant	Recipient Institution
Scientific Use Files for Continuing Vocational Training Survey		
Cost-Advantageous Provision of Scientific Use Files of the Microcensuses 1998-2004, the Income and Consumption Sample 1998 and the Time Use Survey 2001/2002 to Academics (increase of project funding)	248,262 euros	Federal Statistical Office
Compilation of a Scientific Use File HIS Graduate Panel 1997 (pilot project)	44,360 euros	Higher Education Information System (HIS)
Redevelopment of the Income and Consumption Sample German Microdata Lab (GML, increase of project funding)	32,515 euros	German Microdata Lab
Business Statistical Panel Data and Factual Anonymization	1,130,580 euros	Federal Statistical Office, Statistical Offices of the Länder, IAW, IAB
Electronic Data Report on Media Analysis: Reading of Newspapers and Magazines in Germany from 1954 to 2002. Aided by Survey Data for Social and Economic Research	146,020 euros	Prof. Heiner Meulemann (University of Cologne)
Combined Firm Data for Germany (KombiFiD)	2,234,576 euros	IAB, Prof. Joachim Wagner (University of Lüneburg), Federal Statistical Office
Compilation of a Scientific Use File HIS Graduate Panel 1989, 1993, and 2001	61,500 euros	HIS
Biographical Data of Selected Social Security System Agencies in Germany	458,919 euros	German Social Security Association, Federal Employment Agency
Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. Access to Internationally Harmonized Population Census Data	92,235 euros	Federal Statistical Office, IAB
An Informational Infrastructure for the E-Science Age. Towards 'Remote Access' – Improvement of the facilities for Monitored Remote Data Processing Using Data Structure Files and Automated Checking of Results.	Not yet approved by BMBF approx. 1,300,000 euros	IAW, Federal Statistical Office. Statistical Offices of the Länder, IAB

Source: German Council for Social and Economic Data

IV.3. Capacity-Building

In its efforts to build knowledge and (methodological) skills within the scientific community that are relevant to the quality of empirical research in Germany, the RatSWD particularly focuses on early career researchers. The strategic planning and strengthening of the RatSWD Young Scholars programme has, according to the

council, been a key focus of its work since 2007. However, the council recognises that more effort and money need to be invested in this area.

a) Young Scholars Workshops

Since 2007, the RatSWD has organised one workshop for early career researchers on “Data Potential for Empirical Social Research: Working and Living in Germany”. It has also co-organised a workshop training young researchers in the use of data of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (*Sozio-oekonomisches Panel*, SOEP), which was conducted in cooperation with the University of Duisburg-Essen. A follow-up of this workshop format is scheduled for 2009 in co-operation with the University of Bielefeld. Finally, the council has also cooperated with the RDC of the Statistical Offices of the Länder, the Berlin University of Technology (TU Berlin), the Free University of Berlin, and the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (*Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften*, GESIS) in offering a workshop on “Longitudinal Analysis Using Official Social and Economic Data”.

b) Expert Report Competitions

Expert report competitions allow scholars to concentrate on new research areas relevant to the RatSWD for a period of approximately three to five months. The average amount of compensation is 10,000 euros per report. Competitions are open to both senior and junior scholars and the council therefore considers them as part of its efforts to support early career researchers. Up to now, three such competitions have been completed:

- Education in Professional Life (2005, 16 reports);
- Arts and Figures – Humanities Scholars in the Workplace (2007, 14 reports);
- Regional Consumer Price Index (2008, 7 reports).

Although contributions to the competitions on education and the humanities used data available from the infrastructure supported by the RatSWD, their results are not directly relevant to the work of the council. The council regards both competitions as means to facilitate the use of newly established options for accessing data. The competition on consumer prices provided input for the reform and improvement of official statistics.

c) Teaching Module

The RatSWD is currently¹⁷ preparing its first teaching module, which will focus on “Research Ethics and Data Protection”. The module covers a broad range of topics, including normative frameworks relevant to research ethics and data protection, methodological requirements and challenges related to these issues that apply at different stages of research projects, and concrete examples of problematic situations related to ethics and data protection as well as their possible resolutions. This activity is aimed at taught courses at universities, attempting to raise awareness of questions falling into the realm of the RatSWD at a very early stage of young researchers’ careers. The council intends to continue its efforts in this direction.

The RatSWD believes that its multidisciplinary scope is a particular strength in this area, allowing the council to provide more balanced advice for specific teaching modules than institutions focused on single scientific disciplines.

IV.4. Publications

The RatSWD makes use of modern information technologies to communicate with its target audiences. Its underlying strategy is to provide free open access to all of its publications. Because this has not yet been achieved for all outlets (in particular, most parts of *Schmollers Jahrbuch* are not freely available), the RatSWD intends to increase its efforts in this respect.

a) RatSWD Newsletter

The RatSWD publishes an electronic quarterly newsletter, which offers current information relevant to the work areas of the RatSWD in a condensed format. The newsletter has approximately 650 subscribers.

b) RatSWD Working Papers

The RatSWD launched its own *RatSWD Working Papers* series at the end of 2007. The original purpose of this publication activity was to offer a vehicle for the early publishing and worldwide dissemination of empirical research findings based on data available through the informational infrastructure recommended by the RatSWD. However, the *RatSWD Working Papers* series has also developed into an outlet for

17 As of 1 April 2009.

publications on conceptual proposals for survey design and papers dealing with research strategy planning.

The series welcomes studies from all social and economic science disciplines. Its target audiences are both empirical researchers working in these disciplines and those providing the data infrastructure for such work. The chair of the council and the managing director act as editors of the series and jointly select the articles for publication. The publication is nonexclusive, implying that articles may be published elsewhere.

The RatSWD is confident that the *RatSWD Working Papers* series is well accepted in the scientific community as well as within the political arena. However, it regards the current scope of the series as being very broad or perhaps even too broad and considers a narrower focus on methodological and science policy topics. An alternative possible solution is perceived in splitting the current series into one series with a scientific focus and another one dealing with the strategic planning of the research infrastructure.

No direct costs for the RatSWD result from this publication activity. All editing and production of this electronic outlet is carried out by student assistants in the business office. The personnel cost amounts to approximately three hours per paper plus screening by a member of the RatSWD or the managing director.

c) Schmollers Jahrbuch

The *Journal of Applied Social Science Studies*, also known as *Schmollers Jahrbuch*, is published four times a year. The journal is bilingual (German and English), uses a standard double-blind peer review system, and publishes applied studies in the social and economic sciences, simulation studies, and policy analyses as well as interdisciplinary studies from fields such as labour economics, social policy, public health, and educational research. It is co-edited by Gert G. Wagner (Technical University Berlin and SOEP Department) and Joachim Wagner (University of Lüneburg).

Since the re-launch of the journal in 2000, it also contains the “European Data Watch” section which offers descriptions of data sources that may be of interest to empirical social scientists, gives examples of questions that are addressed using the data, and informs how to access the data for research and teaching. This section is

freely available on the internet. The RatSWD considers *Schmollers Jahrbuch* one of the few possible outlets for such articles.

Given the perceived difficulty of creating and promoting a new, proprietary, scientific journal, the RatSWD decided to support *Schmollers Jahrbuch* instead of attempting to launch its own journal. There is no direct expenditure of this support. However, the business office of the RatSWD provides office support of approximately eight hours per week.

d) Books

Since its constitution, the RatSWD has published four edited volumes:

- Rolf, G.; Zwick, M.; Wagner, G. G. (Eds.): Advances in the informational infrastructure in Germany. In honour of Johann Halen on his 65th birthday and Hans-Jürgen Krupp on his 75th birthday (Fortschritte der informationellen Infrastruktur in Deutschland. Festschrift für Johann Hahlen zum 65. Geburtstag und Hans-Jürgen Krupp zum 75. Geburtstag), Baden-Baden 2008.
- Solga, H.; Huschka, D.; Eilsberger, P.; Wagner, G. G. (Eds.): Ingenuity in uncertain times (Findigkeit in unsicheren Zeiten), Volume I, Opladen 2008.
- Solga, H.; Huschka, D.; Eilsberger, P.; Wagner, G. G. (Eds.): Scholars of the humanities: Competent, creative, motivated – and still without a chance? (GeisteswissenschaftlerInnen: kompetent, kreativ, motiviert – und doch chancenlos?), Volume II, Opladen 2008.
- German Council for Social and Economic Data (Ed.): Optimisation of the existing German system of crime statistics (Optimierung des bestehenden kriminalstatistischen Systems in Deutschland), Baden-Baden (in print).

One further edited book summarising the results of the project “Developing the Research Infrastructure for the Social and Behavioral Sciences in Germany and Beyond” is in preparation. This volume will be edited by the RatSWD and is scheduled for publication in 2009.

IV.5. Assessment of Success

There have been no designated external evaluations of the RatSWD to date. As a matter of course, however, there are regular interim reports submitted to the funding body (BMBF).

The RatSWD believes that in most of its work areas, ongoing and sustainable progress can be seen. It asserts that it is needed in the future to moderate the further process on a regular basis and guide what it regards as promising developments. The council believes that it has been particularly successful in engaging academic research, official statistics, ministries, and governmental research agencies in one forum to promote better data access, better data quality, and generally improving conditions for empirical social and economic science research. The RatSWD also considers its support for early career researchers a success.

The council asserts that it has contributed to the establishment of RDCs and DSCs and has generally raised awareness of needs for action concerning the informational infrastructure.

Although the council believes that its activities have stimulated discussion concerning the strategic planning and development of the German data infrastructure, it acknowledges that this is the area in which it has had the least success and in which considerable future work is necessary. The RatSWD supposes that it would facilitate progress if all major stakeholders (including subject-specific professional associations [*wissenschaftliche Fachgesellschaften*], government research agencies and responsible federal ministries, the German Council of Science and Humanities, the Leibniz Association, and others) clarified their position towards the RatSWD and formulated a coherent approach to the question of how the research infrastructure in the social, behavioural, and economic sciences should be developed in the future. This would better enable the RatSWD to act as a platform for strategic infrastructure planning discussions. The RatSWD intends to put more energy into establishing an ongoing exchange of ideas with these bodies and to work towards increasing concerted action.

There are three relevant areas in which the RatSWD has not yet shown notable activity. Firstly, the KVI report has requested that the council advance the continuous monitoring of German society. Taking into account the current restructuring of GESIS, however, and given the likeliness of a significant overlap between GESIS and the RatSWD with respect to the task of social monitoring, the council will wait for the initial results of the restructuring of GESIS before formulating a position.

Second, currently the RatSWD does not deal with qualitative data (interview transcripts, images). The council's statement identifies reasons for this as being a lack of interest or an inability to take concerted action on the side of the subject-specific professional associations concerned with qualitative research. In principle, however, the RatSWD states its interest in qualitative data and would welcome a member who promotes efforts directed at increasing access to and use of such data.

There is a growing amount of commercial transaction data which is used by an emerging field of computational social science. The RatSWD is aware of this development and has elicited one expert review on the topic in the context of the "KVI Updated" project. However, given that there are large numbers of open legal and ethical questions concerning such data and, to date, no strong interest has been articulated by the research community, the council has not yet taken further action.

A.V. Organisation and Resources

V.1. Composition and Election of the RatSWD

The RatSWD is composed of six members who are representatives of social, behavioural, and economic science disciplines and six members representing the data providers. The six scientific representatives, who contribute the user perspective, are nominated by election biannually at the Conference for Social and Economic Data and can only be re-elected (re-nominated) once. Passive and active voting rights are limited to scientists who have completed their doctorate and are affiliated with a German university or other scientific research institution. In this respect, the RatSWD adopted the DFG election rules. The RatSWD determines a list of subject-specific professional associations (*Fachgesellschaften*) entitled to make proposals for the election. Additional associations may be added at the conference. The professional associations currently eligible to propose include the following:

- German Society for Political Science (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Politikwissenschaft*);
- German Association for Political Science (*Deutsche Vereinigung für Politische Wissenschaft*);
- German Psychological Society (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie*);
- German Sociological Association (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie*);
- German Statistical Society (*Deutsche Statistische Gesellschaft*);

- German Economic Association (*Verein für Socialpolitik*);
- German Academic Association for Business Research (*Verband der Hochschullehrer für Betriebswirtschaft*).

Following stipulations in the Act on Appointments to Federal Bodies (*Bundesgremienbesetzungsgesetz*), each professional society entitled to propose may propose one suitable woman and one suitable man for office. Alternatively, “free” candidates may be nominated by ten eligible scientists. The vote is held in two lists, one for female candidates and one for male candidates. Each voter has three votes for the list of male candidates and three votes for the list of female candidates and may only cast one vote for each of the candidates. The three male and the three female candidates with the most votes are elected to represent the user perspective within the council. Nominated candidates are officially appointed by the federal ministry responsible for research (i.e., the BMBF) in accord with the other federal ministries. At the first election of nominees in 2004, 418 votes were cast. During the last election for the third term of office in November 2008, 548 eligible scientists voted.

The representatives of the data providers are nominated by relevant data producing institutions (which are selected by the BMBF). One representative from the field of data provision will be nominated by each of the following:

- The Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*);
- The Statistical Offices of the Länder (*Statistische Landesämter*);
- The Institute for Employment Research (*Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung*, IAB) or the German Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*);
- The German Social Security System;
- A data producing institution from another area (2008-2010: SOEP);
- An institution that either hosts an RDC or a DSC (2008-2010: GESIS).

For a full organisational chart of the RatSWD and its business office see Appendix 1.

V.2. Council Meetings

The RatSWD must convene at least twice per year, but usually holds four to five scheduled meetings. It chooses a Chair and a Deputy Chair from among its members. The chair leads the council meetings. RatSWD decisions are made by majority

vote of those present. In the event of a tied vote, the chair's vote will be decisive. In principle, the council meetings are not public, but guests can be invited to participate at specific points of the agenda.

The RatSWD establishes its own rules of internal procedure setting down the procedures, tasks, and powers of authority of the chair and the business office. These rules can only be changed by a two-third majority of the members of the RatSWD and take effect only after being approved by the federal ministry responsible for research. Representatives of the federal government and the state governments participate in the meetings in an advisory capacity.

V.3. Budget

The RatSWD is fully funded by the BMBF. The average yearly budget for the current funding period (September 2008 to February 2011) of the RatSWD lies at approx. 556,000 euros. This includes approx. 190,000 euros p.a. for business office personnel, approx. 232,000 euros for expert report competitions, workshops, and conferences, approx. 23,000 euros for travel of RatSWD members and its business office, and approx. 30,000 euros p.a. for overhead paid to DIW Berlin including office supplies, printing, publications, literature, and general expenses. There is a rent of approx. 37,000 euros p.a. for office space within the DIW premises. In addition, the 4th KSWD and a project called "Developing the Research Infrastructure for the Social and Behavioral Sciences in Germany and Beyond: Progress Since 2001, Current Situation, and Future Demands" are financed by the BMBF through additional funds of approx. 380,000 euros, which include no personnel costs (2008 to 2009). The RatSWD is part of the cost accounting (*Kosten-Leistungs-Rechnung*) within the DIW programme budget. The bookkeeping is controlled by the DIW Berlin and its auditing company.

The RatSWD regards the current level of its budgetary resources in light of its current tasks as sufficient yet not luxurious. The most pressing problem with respect to funding identified by the council lies in the current lack of a secure long-term financial perspective. Funding under the current scheme will end in February 2011 and a final decision about whether and in what form funding will be continued still has to be taken. From the perspective of the RatSWD this constitutes a problem when it comes to the mid- and long-term planning of its strategic work.

V.4. Personnel

The members of the RatSWD volunteer their time without monetary compensation.

Funding is provided for 3.74 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in the business office of the RatSWD (see Appendix 1). This includes the full-time managing director, one part-time research assistant, one part-time team assistant and three part-time student assistants. In addition, the RatSWD employs three part-time contract workers including one scientific assistant and two support staff covering technical aspects of the internet presence of the RatSWD as well as publication support (see Appendix 2).

When recruiting new staff, the RatSWD aims to identify candidates with experience in empirical social or economic research as well as strong administrative skills. Difficulties in recruiting employees have resulted from the fact that the current funding arrangements can not offer new employees any definite long-term prospects. The managing director of the RatSWD has been selected and appointed by the members of the RatSWD and currently holds a fixed-term contract.

In 2008, an increased workload led to the creation of the position of the *Scientific Assistant to the Director*, which was made possible by additional funds released by the BMBF. Also, since 2007, the business office has increased the number of student assistants and contract workers.

The conditions of employment are determined by laws regulating employment in public service. These laws, together with financial constraints, led to the employment of ad-hoc contract workers, a mode of employment that the council characterises as an insufficient solution for the increasing demands for both administrative and scientific support.

The RatSWD characterises the team of the business office as highly motivated and regularly working overtime. The business office reports working at its upper limits. The council believes that any additional tasks would need to be met by respective increases in funding or other projects will be compromised.

V.5. Premises and Facilities

The business office of the RatSWD currently rents five office rooms from the DIW in Berlin. It also pays for access to conference rooms on DIW premises. For larger conferences or when DIW conference rooms are unavailable, external conference venues are hired. Computing equipment, office equipment, and IT services are covered by the overhead costs as defined in the financial contract between the DIW and the BMBF. The council states that, all in all, there is no cross-subsidisation through the DIW.

The RatSWD believes that the current offices provide adequate space and equipment for the present number of staff. However, access to conference rooms does not meet current needs. This is partly because the conference rooms within the DIW are not always of sufficient size, and also because the DIW administration did not give priority to the needs of the RatSWD in the past. In fact, the status of the RatSWD within the DIW is one similar to many third-party funded projects. According to the RatSWD, the support by the administrative department of the DIW is “improvable”.

The main advantage of housing the RatSWD at the DIW is, according to the council, the possibility for fruitful scientific dialogue and exchange, particularly with the SOEP Department. The scientific connection to the SOEP Department is experienced as very productive for the work of the business office. The managing director of the RatSWD is also affiliated with the SOEP as a permanent visiting fellow.

Further, the RDC of the Berlin-Brandenburg Statistical Office is located in the same building, adding another connection that is perceived as very close and productive.

The RatSWD indicates that it is open to considering alternative locations for its administrative offices. However, from the perspective of the council, it is mandatory that the offices remain in Berlin. This is because (a) the RatSWD itself is based in Berlin because Berlin offers the best opportunities to interact with government officials, nongovernmental organisations, and research organisations and (b) any major move would imply losing most or all of the current staff members and their experience. The council believes that if the relation between the RatSWD business office and the DIW administration, in particular the relations to its bookkeeping and controlling units as well as access to meeting rooms within the DIW were improved, the location in the DIW building would be satisfactory.

A.VI. Future Development

The RatSWD predicts that it will remain the most important platform for discussing and developing the research data infrastructure in the social and economic, and, increasingly, behavioural sciences. Thus, the overall founding goals and general work areas will remain central to the future work of the council, but should be continuously adjusted, clarified, and adapted to the current situation.

VI.1. Strategic Development of the Data Infrastructure

The RatSWD believes that up to now its progress in promoting the strategic planning of the German research infrastructure has been limited. According to the RatSWD this has been caused by the fact that the different stakeholders “are not doing their ‘homework’”. It intends to increase its efforts in this area. In this context, it sees one of its main tasks in the development of a “Social, Economic, and Behavioral Science Data Infrastructure Roadmap” along with regular updates. The council intends to play a permanent role with respect to infrastructure planning by facilitating communication between the stakeholders in academia, official statistics, and government bodies.

One strategic issue that the RatSWD considers as crucial is the question of how long-term data archiving can be achieved. In 2001, the KVI recommended asking the RatSWD to attend to this problem. Within the recent “KVI Updated” project, the RatSWD has commissioned short expert reports on this topic. After the publication of these reports, the RatSWD intends to help organise a broad discussion among the main stakeholders concerned with this question (e.g., the Federal Archive Koblenz, the National Library, the Leibniz Association with its GESIS Archive, and the Max Planck Society).

Another strategic issue concerning the informational infrastructure that the RatSWD intends to address is the international dimension of data collection and data access. Through bodies like the International Data Forum, the council intends to promote access for non-Germans who would like to work with German data. In this context, remote access to German data is of particular relevance.

Central to the international development is the improvement of research infrastructures at the European level. The RatSWD emphasises that the planning processes within ESFRI are of utmost importance to the future infrastructure landscape. Its cur-

rent chair was the German representative in the ESFRI social sciences and humanities working group. One of the goals of the “KVI Updated” project is to enhance the possibilities for future collaborations with EU-level and international infrastructures by providing a better overview of the available national infrastructures.

A major challenge in any future development of the research infrastructure in the social and economic sciences lies in the need to closely collaborate with all stakeholders, and, in particular, the data users and data providers. Although the RatSWD sees itself well positioned to organise such communication processes, it also identifies problems that need to be overcome.

As far as data providers are concerned, the council generally reports excellent collaboration – with the fragmented, heterogeneous, and complex field of health data constituting an exception. Further, the collaboration with commercial data collectors could, from the perspective of the RatSWD, be further developed. Generally, the council believes that targeted funding could increase the number of public-private partnerships in this area.

As for the data users, the RatSWD believes that there is a lack of strategic planning activity on the side of the subject-specific professional associations. In particular, the council observes that these associations do not successfully coordinate their goals both internally and with each other. The RatSWD hopes that the “KVI Updated” project will increase the strategic competences of the subject-specific professional associations and bring together the disciplines more closely.

The current approach of the RatSWD is to involve individual scientists from different disciplines in its work whenever possible hoping that this will lead to an increased engagement of the respective disciplines in the long-term. In principle, there is the possibility for subject-specific professional associations to apply for the status of being entitled to propose appointees at the KSWD. However, up to now only the German Psychological Society has made use of this opportunity.

VI.2. Promotion of Early Career Researchers

The RatSWD intends to strengthen its activities in the promotion of young scholars (including students). It aims to build on recent positive experiences by commissioning the development of lecture modules, starting with one on research ethics and data

protection. The council observes further potential in developing certified standard university lectures within its thematic priorities.

VI.3. Funding Relevant Infrastructure Projects

The council identifies problems for researchers in Germany in acquiring funding for projects in the field of survey methodology and publishing the results of such special scientific endeavours. The RatSWD indicates that, for this reason, it is ready to act as a funding body itself for data and service-driven research projects that are too focused or specific for funding bodies such as the German Research Foundation. Such projects, according to the council, could prominently include efforts aimed at developing the data quality of nonacademic data providers and governmental research agencies. This would extend the RatSWD's role from being an advisory body to the BMBF consulted on a case-by-case basis to being a funding body on a regular basis.

The RatSWD holds that the German research funding system is a very coordinated one with a tendency to centrally plan the distribution of funds. It questions the efficacy of this approach and implies that funding should be devolved to more bodies better able to pick up new trends and adjust their funding decisions accordingly. The council believes that it can be one body helping to increase the effectiveness and transparency of the research funding system in Germany.

VI.4. Organisational Changes

The RatSWD formulates several desiderata concerning its future composition and organisation.

The council believes that two elements of the current election procedure should be changed. First, the RatSWD proposes to extend members' terms of office from two to three years. The council further recommends increasing the number of possible uninterrupted terms of office for each member from two to three terms. Assuming successive re-elections, this would allow an elected member to remain in office for a maximum of nine years rather than the current four years. According to the RatSWD, this would help to retain useful experience within the advisory body and thereby make its work more efficient.

Second, the RatSWD considers its multidisciplinary composition an important asset. To ensure this multidisciplinary composition, it regards it as mandatory to avoid that

representatives of one discipline dominate the council. This could currently occur through a combination of candidates proposed by the respective subject-specific association and “free” candidates from the same discipline. To limit the risk of such an undesired outcome, the RatSWD suggests limiting the number of votes each voter can cast to two votes for the list of female candidates and another two votes for the list of male candidates.

In addition, the total number of council members should, according to the RatSWD, be increased to 16 (eight representatives of the scientific users and eight representatives of the data providers). Together, these measures would ensure a balanced representation of the relevant disciplines.

The RatSWD proposes to supply resources for a “teaching buy-out” for the chairperson of the council, if the chair is an academic. The RatSWD reports that experience has revealed that regular professors do not have the time required to fill the position of the RatSWD chair. Both persons who have served as chair of the council to date had reduced teaching commitments because they held joint appointments between universities and non-university research institutions (*Gemeinsame Berufungen*). The council believes that it should be possible for regular professors to act as heads of the council.

The RatSWD further proposes to restructure the current representation of data providers in the council. It believes that it is infeasible to adequately represent all current and future RDCs and DSCs in the RatSWD itself. Instead, the council suggests that a standing committee of RDCs and DSCs should be established which should focus on specific questions related to these institutions. The standing committee would send two representatives to the RatSWD. The remaining seats of the data providers would be occupied by major data providing institutions, namely the Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*), the Statistical Offices of the Länder (*Statistische Landesämter*), the German Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*), the German Pension Insurance, a data provider from institutes of the Leibniz Association, and a data provider of the governmental research agencies (*Ressortforschungseinrichtungen*). According to the RatSWD, these changes would allow the council to focus on making fundamental strategic, methodological, and infrastructural decisions and binding recommendations.

Finally, the RatSWD believes that the appointment procedures should be changed. The RatSWD supposes that its recommendations were more binding at the state level if a joint appointment by federal and state agencies rather than the BMBF alone were possible. Ideally, from the perspective of the RatSWD, appointments would be jointly made by the German Federal President and the German Federal Government.

B. Evaluation

B.I. Core Tasks and Scientific Relevance

The report of the Commission to Improve the Statistical Infrastructure in Cooperation with the Scientific Community and Official Statistics (KVI)¹⁸ has set out an ambitious agenda for the German informational infrastructure in the social and economic sciences. One of its central recommendations was the establishment of the RatSWD, for which it defined a number of core tasks. These included:

- The provision of a systematic appraisal of the German informational infrastructure and of recommendations concerning its future development;
- The improvement of the quality of social and economic data available to researchers;
- The promotion of the continuous monitoring of German society;
- Support of the establishment and evaluation of Research Data Centers (RDCs) and Data Service Centers (DSCs) aimed at providing scientific access to data previously not or not easily accessible to researchers;
- Suggestions concerning relevant research infrastructures that should be funded.

Since its foundation in 2004 the RatSWD has successfully implemented many of the improvements and changes proposed by the KVI. It has had a remarkably positive effect on the research environment for empirical scientific work in sociology, economics, and other social sciences. The establishment of the council can, therefore, be considered a success story of a “bottom-up” initiative coordinating the interests of various scientific disciplines in order to improve their long-term research environment and research infrastructure.

As far as its original core tasks are concerned, the RatSWD has done particularly well in improving access to official statistical data by promoting the establishment of RDCs and DSCs and by laying down rules and standards for their operation. The establishment of these new institutions has resulted in a significant number of user requests for official statistical data and in related scientific publications. The new infrastructure has swiftly established itself and has become absolutely essential to cutting-edge empirical research in the social and economic sciences in Germany.

¹⁸ Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik (Ed.): Wege zu einer besseren informationellen Infrastruktur. Gutachten der vom Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung eingesetzten Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik, Baden-Baden 2001.

The RatSWD has also shown considerable activity in suggesting relevant research infrastructure projects for funding. The BMBF, in particular, has frequently sought scientific evaluations by the RatSWD before funding projects relevant to the informational infrastructure in the social and economic sciences.¹⁹ This demonstrates a clear demand for a specialised advisory body with a strong representation of both scientific users and providers of data and services in this area.

Recently, the RatSWD has taken first steps in compiling a systematic account and appraisal of the German informational infrastructure in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences and will publish the *KVI Updated* report in 2009. The document will include both an assessment of the current informational infrastructure landscape and recommendations concerning future developments in this area. This is a timely enterprise setting some of the foundations for future strategic planning concerning the informational infrastructure.

Through various workshops, hearings, and expert competitions bringing together data providers and data users, the council has provided a platform for major advancements concerning the quality of social and economic data.

Finally, although the RatSWD has been less active in promoting the continuous monitoring of German society, its strategy to wait for the restructuring of GESIS²⁰ in order to establish cooperation and avoid duplication of effort is reasonable. However, a cooperative arrangement in this area should be reached as soon as possible.

Through these activities, the RatSWD has become an important and valuable consultancy institution in the area of the German informational infrastructure and has contributed to a significant improvement in the scientific potential of German social and economic sciences. The core functions of the RatSWD are of a continuous nature and it is therefore mandatory that the core functions of the RatSWD continue to be fulfilled in the future.

19 See Section A.IV.2, Table 2.

20 The Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS) is a member of the Leibniz Association. It used to consist of three relatively independent entities, the GESIS-IZ, GESIS-ZA, and GESIS-ZUMA. However, it has been repeatedly recommended that the GESIS should develop into a more integrated organisation with a common service and research strategy (see: Wissenschaftsrat: GESIS – Gesellschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Infrastruktureinrichtungen e. V. in Bonn, Cologne und Mannheim, in: Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahmen zu Instituten der Blauen Liste, Vol. II, Cologne 1998, and Senat der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft: Stellungnahme zur Gesellschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Infrastruktureinrichtungen (GESIS), Bonn 2005). This process of increased integration is currently under way (see: Senat der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft: Stellungnahme zur GESIS – Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften, Bonn 2008).

B.II. Current and Future Work Areas

II.1. Setting the Agenda of the Council

Currently, the overarching tasks of the RatSWD are defined by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), which finances and organises the RatSWD on behalf of the German Federal Government as a whole. At the level of its day-to-day activities, the RatSWD is a self-directed body that sets its own work agenda.

Now that some of the original tasks have been fully or partly fulfilled, there seems to be a tendency of the RatSWD to expand its activities and take on new kinds of tasks. In particular, the council has decided to engage in capacity-building activities focused on students and early career researchers and has also expanded the range of its publications.

Rather than pursuing “natural” growth in the scope of activities, the RatSWD should engage in a deliberate process of defining its core work areas for the future. This process should issue a new mission statement that identifies the council’s primary tasks for the coming years. Although the council should remain flexible and self-directed in its day-to-day activities, the mission statement should set out the permanent central work areas. These should be clearly distinguished from derivative or minor tasks.

The mission statement should focus on the RatSWD’s indispensable core functions in the current national social, economic, and behavioural science infrastructure and explain clearly how these functions should be extended in the future. To play a key role in the future development of the informational infrastructure, it is critical that the council ensures to fulfil the following functions:

- *Platform function* for dialogue between data providers, data users, policy makers, and to some degree private sector enterprises;
- *Coordinating function* for the identification of common interests on the side of the data providers as well as on the side of a growing community of data users from the full range of disciplines in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences;

- *Lobbying function* working on behalf of scientific data users to open up further sources of data to scientific inquiry, to increase data quality, and to establish scientific influence on data collection programmes;
- *Standard-setting, evaluating, and clearing-house function* for RDCs and DSCs. This includes the definition of minimum requirements for RDCs and DSCs and for data collection and provision more generally, the monitoring of compliance with these standards, and the coordination of the future development of RDCs and DSCs as well as their applications for project funding to the BMBF and other funding bodies;
- *Review and strategic planning function* concerning the future needs in developing the informational infrastructure in cooperation and coordination with other advisory bodies and funding institutions;
- *Scientific advisory function* to the German Federal Government (in particular the BMBF) and the governments of the German federal states concerning the planning of large scale public data collections and the future development of the informational infrastructure;
- *International network function* cooperating with similar bodies in other countries to make international data available to German researchers as well as German data to interested researchers abroad.

All of these functions directly concern strategic issues related to the informational infrastructure. This is in contrast to derivative tasks such as teaching or training young researchers and publishing activities reporting the mere use rather than the strategic development of data sources. The distinction between primary and derivative tasks based on the mission statement should have clear implications for the use of financial and personnel resources.

Rather than merely expanding the types of activities it pursues, the council should consider at least three alternative ways of future expansion:

1. Extending its focus to other types of data such as qualitative data, geo-coded data, data from economic research institutes, administrative and commercial transaction data, and data relevant to public health, educational research, and psychology;
2. Broadening its constituency base by involving subject-specific professional associations that have not yet fully engaged with its work;

3. Expanding the regional scope of its activities from national to European and global levels.

The challenge for the council therefore is to focus its core mission and at the same time extend the types of data and the number of scientific communities it deals with as well as its geographical scope.

II.2. Promoting Data Access and Data Quality

a) Research Data Centers

There is no doubt that the establishment of RDCs has exceeded expectations in terms of its effect on social scientists' access to data. The dynamic development that has been started by the KVI report could not have been foreseen by the members of the commission. Whereas data collected by public and private bodies not predominantly concerned with research had previously been difficult or impossible to access for interested researchers, significant datasets are now accessible with little effort in many areas. By overseeing the establishment of RDCs and evaluating their operation, the RatSWD has played a pivotal role in this development.

The RatSWD's guidelines concerning minimum standards of good practice for RDCs²¹ have ensured that participating institutions provide quick, user-friendly, non-discriminatory and nonexclusive access to the data they have collected. The council has also worked to prevent excessive fees for data usage that might be prohibitive for some researchers. Usually, data are provided for free or against a fee covering only the marginal costs of providing access to a data set. However, due to the unstable funding situation of some of the RDCs, significantly higher fees are currently being discussed. In order to ensure the continuing attractiveness of the highly successful informational infrastructure in this area, it is essential to avoid fees that might significantly reduce usage. The RatSWD should seek discussions with all relevant parties to ensure both the sustainable funding of the RDCs and uninhibited data access for scientific users.

The activities of the RatSWD have helped to ensure the high acceptance of the RDCs as a new element of the informational infrastructure by the scientific community. The number of user requests for and publications based on data provided by the

21 Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten (Ed.): The German Council for Social and Economic Data: Criteria for Research Data Centers (Kriterien des Rates für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten für Forschungsdatenzentren), Berlin 2007.

RDCs is impressive. As a next step, it is vital to implement institutional funding arrangements that support the continued provision of these services after initial BMBF funding expires.

Although the initial four RDCs were located at institutions for which pressing data needs existed and continue to exist, further dynamic development can be expected in the future. The German Federal Government asked the German Council of Science and Humanities in 2004 to evaluate all governmental research agencies. In the course of these evaluations, the German Council of Science and Humanities has recommended the foundation of RDCs at the following institutions in particular:

- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (*Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung*, BiBB);²²
- Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (*Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung*, BBR);²³
- Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany (*Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie*, BSH);²⁴
- German Youth Institute (*Deutsches Jugendinstitut*, DJI);²⁵
- *Deutscher Wetterdienst* (DWD);²⁶
- German Centre of Gerontology (*Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen*, DZA).²⁷

Of these, the RDC at the BiBB has already been established.

The German Council of Science and Humanities has further issued general recommendations concerning the establishment of RDCs in its statement on the role and future development of governmental research agencies²⁸ and in its recommendations concerning the strengthening of economic research at higher education institutions²⁹.

22 Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BiBB), Bonn, in: Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 2005, Vol. II, Cologne, 2006, p. 173-238.

23 Wissenschaftsrat: Wissenschaftspolitische Stellungnahme zum Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (BBR), Bonn, in: Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 2006, Vol. I, Cologne, 2007, p. 287-347.

24 Wissenschaftsrat: Stellungnahme zum Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie (BSH), Hamburg und Rostock, (Drs. 8478-08) Rostock, November 2008.

25 Wissenschaftsrat: Wissenschaftspolitische Stellungnahme zum Deutschen Jugendinstitut (DJI), München, in: Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 2008, Vol. I, Cologne 2009, p. 439-515.

26 Wissenschaftsrat: Wissenschaftspolitische Stellungnahme zum Deutschen Wetterdienst (DWD), Offenbach, in: Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 2006, Vol. I, Cologne, 2007, p. 491-572.

27 Wissenschaftsrat: Wissenschaftspolitische Stellungnahme zum Deutschen Zentrum für Altersfragen e.V. (DZA), Berlin, in: Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 2008, Vol. I, Cologne 2009, p. 375-438.

28 Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen zur Rolle und künftigen Entwicklung der Bundeseinrichtung mit FuE-Aufgaben, Cologne 2007.

29 Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen zur Stärkung der wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Forschung an den Hochschulen, in: Wissenschaftsrat: Empfehlungen und Stellungnahmen 2002, Vol. I, Cologne, 2003, p. 233-398.

The RDC at the IQB has adopted RatSWD standards. Further RDCs have been established for the SOEP as well as by GESIS for the ALLBUS, for data of international survey studies, and for data of election research. Others, such as one distributing the data of the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), are currently in the planning stages. Given dynamic and ongoing rise in the number of RDCs, the council will become more and more important as a forum for the RDCs to coordinate their efforts and discuss challenges. The significant increase in RDCs and the growing diversity of the data sources they administer will likely require new forms of coordination if the common “brand name” is to be retained. The RatSWD should aim to offer a forum for such coordination as well as actively develop the future vision for a national system of RDCs.

Such challenges include extending the RDC-to-RDC approach to data dissemination, establishing international data access (e.g., by founding an RDC in the United States), providing round-the-clock data access, developing appropriate metadata systems, and continuously monitoring data use. Besides providing a platform for coordinating the activities of individual RDCs, the RatSWD should also offer its own input. In particular, the representation of data users on the council should help to ensure that user friendliness and timeliness of data access (i.e., being able to access data as soon as possible after their collection, and, whenever suitable, in the form of scientific use files) remain high on the priority list of the RDCs. The RatSWD should further strive to retain its position as a clearing-house and evaluator of the applications for funding by the RDCs to the BMBF and other funding bodies.

b) Data Service Centers

The development of DSCs has been less dynamic than that of RDCs. This might partly be because RDCs themselves have taken on many of the tasks that the KVI originally had in mind for DSCs. These include, for example, creating user-friendly datasets and adding metadata annotations. It might also be because the development of the internet has made information search and data access quicker and easier, that is, the role of an intermediary service centre might be less important.

The RatSWD is aware of this situation and has discussed suggestions for refocusing the DSCs on thematic areas such as, for example, employment data, health data, media data, or longitudinal social survey data. Whether or not these suggestions

should be implemented is outside the remit of this report. However, in coordination with other relevant bodies – in particular those currently hosting DSCs (GESIS and the IZA) – the RatSWD has an important role to play in developing viable suggestions for the future of DSCs.

c) Future Data Access Requirements

The RatSWD is asked not only to remain flexible and open with regard to the data needs of social, economic, and behavioural scientists but also to actively query the respective communities about such needs. Currently, there is only little RatSWD activity in the following areas:

- Qualitative data such as interview transcripts, images, video and audio data;
- Public-health data;
- Administrative and commercial transaction data;
- Data from economic research institutions such as the ifo Institute for Economic Research or the Centre for European Economic Research (*Zentrum für Europäische Wirtschaftsforschung, ZEW*);
- Geo-coded data;
- Data relevant to educational research and psychology.

Some of these areas are probably equally challenging to address as the provision of scientific access to official statistical microdata. Economic research institutions and users of their data could benefit from increased coordination and the definition of common standards, but these institutions might be reluctant to cooperate with the RatSWD when making their data available to scientific users. Qualitative data storage and access is beset with a number of difficult technical questions. The area of public-health research is a large and heterogeneous field with strong actors such as the Robert Koch Institute, the Environmental Protection Agency, the German Research Centre for Environmental Health, and the German Cancer Research Center. The German federal states might be reluctant to release microdata on education with possible political implications. Finally, geo-coded data as well as transaction data might be particularly sensitive in terms of data protection.

However, this should not keep the RatSWD from actively engaging with the respective scientific communities and relevant data providers. The *KVI Updated* process elicited expert reports on most of the named areas and is an important step in this

direction. Apparent lack of interest or engagement by the scientific communities or the subject-specific professional associations should not keep the council from serious investments in the opening up of new data collections to scientific inquiry. In many cases, it might only be the availability of new data sources superior to the existing ones that will bring relevant actors into the plan. The RatSWD needs the support of relevant communities and it should take up the task to raise such support.

d) Influence on Data Quality

Whereas the initial focus of the work of the RatSWD was mainly on data access, a new promising work area that has emerged is the provision of scientific advice in the planning stages of data collection efforts. The Census Commission (*Zensuskommission*), which has the task of providing scientific advice for the implementation of the Census 2011, is a prime example for this development. Three current members of the RatSWD are also members of this commission. Such early engagement seems to be the best way to ensure that scientific standards and the needs of scientific users are taken into account in large scale public data collection efforts.

A second way in which the RatSWD influences the quality of data available to the social, economic, and behavioural sciences is the setting of informal standards. Remarkably, there are signs that a stage has been reached where not only the actual activities pursued by the council but the mere existence of the council entails positive consequences for data quality. For example, there is an increasing sensitivity amongst data providing institutions for the legitimate needs of scientific users. This is true both for bodies that collect official statistical data and for large-scale publicly funded scientific data collection efforts. Thus, early on, the NEPS has made provisions to ensure that the collected data are quickly and freely made available to scientific users.

Finally, if needed, the RatSWD should provide a platform or advice for the development of formal standards that help to improve data quality. In this context, the formulation of nationally and – increasingly – internationally shared definitions of concepts used in official statistics is a relevant demand of scientific and commercial users of such data.

II.3. Data Distribution and Archiving

To date, the RatSWD has not been strongly engaged in issues concerning standards for data archiving, (long-term) data storage, and data distribution. Other bodies like, for example, the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI), the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS), and, in the future, the Council of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA) play an important role in this context. The RatSWD should cooperate with these bodies and avoid any duplication of efforts. As far as data storage and distribution are concerned, the RatSWD and other relevant institutions in this area should cooperate closely to find solutions that centralise those tasks that can be most efficiently achieved by a central institution, but – particularly relating to longitudinal data – preserve sufficient flexibility and proximity to the original data collectors to allow addressing the specificities of these “living” datasets when providing user advice.

II.4. International Collaboration

The RatSWD has contributed to the work of the International Data Forum (IDF), which aims to facilitate and coordinate the international collection and sharing of data in the social sciences. It also reports observing the activities of other national and international bodies concerned with the development of the informational infrastructure.

International collaboration concerning access to microdata is still at its beginning and fraught with challenging political and ethical issues. However, this should not keep the RatSWD from engaging more actively with international data providers (e.g., Eurostat) and with national and international bodies with a task portfolio similar to its own (e.g., the European Statistical Advisory Committee, the OECD Open Access Initiative, the UK Data Forum, the Founding Committee of the International Data Forum). In contrast, the experiences that the RatSWD has collected in working to improve the German informational infrastructure within a complex federal architecture should be highly useful in an international context. The current strategy seems too reactive given the dynamic international developments. In order to contribute to shaping these developments, the RatSWD should actively represent the interests of German data providers and scientific data users. It should also fully contribute to international developments regarding European research infrastructures in the social sci-

ences. In particular, it should be instrumental in identifying newly arising needs for infrastructures in fields not yet covered by international efforts such as the ESFRI process. Increased engagement seems particularly timely at the European level, where increasing amounts of microdata are collected and should be made available to scientific users. Similar to the national environment in the late 1990s, there might be a window of opportunity for scientific data access at the European level that the RatSWD should not hesitate to exploit and that should form an important part of its future international activities.³⁰

The RatSWD should also take on a monitoring function concerning international developments that might be relevant to the informational infrastructure. For example, the INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe) directive³¹ of 2007 will create new opportunities concerning the accessibility of geo-coded data in Europe. The RatSWD should consider itself a link between such political developments and the specific concerns of scientific users who might profit from the availability of such data.

The RatSWD should consider whether its current acronym is suitable when increasingly engaging in international activities or whether a more widely memorable abbreviation might be necessary.

Besides internationalising its own activities, the RatSWD also has a facilitating role to play in the internationalisation strategies of RDCs and DSCs. In this context, the RatSWD does not only have a responsibility to push for increased access of researchers at German research institutions to international datasets, but also, vice versa, to increase the visibility of and access to data available within the German infrastructure for international researchers.

II.5. Capacity-Building and Teaching

In 2008 the RatSWD decided to extend its activities in the area of capacity-building amongst young researchers.³² The goal was to train empirically oriented young scientists in the use of the informational infrastructure opened up by the RatSWD. The

30 Reeh, K.: Einige europapolitische Überlegungen zur Weiterentwicklung der Dateninfrastruktur für die Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften, in: RatSWD Working Paper Series, 54 (2009).

31 The European Parliament and the European Council: Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE), in: Official Journal of the European Union, (25.04.2007), p. L108/1-L108/14.

32 Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten: Nachwuchsförderung des RatSWD, http://www.ratswd.de/download/publikationen_rat/RatSWD_Nachwuchsfoerderung.pdf, Berlin, 9.4.2008.

two main tools to do so are Young Scholars Workshops and Expert Report Competitions. In addition, the council has recently started to develop a teaching module on ethics and data protection aimed at students in the empirical social and economic sciences.

Although there is much to be said for the training of early career researchers, the priority of these newly appropriated tasks has to be judged against the core tasks of the RatSWD on the backdrop of limited available resources. It then becomes apparent that conducting expert report competitions on “Education in Professional Life” or “Arts and Figures – Humanities Scholars in the Workplace” as well as offering specialised workshops for users interested in particular data sources are – in the context of the RatSWD’s specific functions – of a lower priority than facilitating high quality access to new types of data for a broader range of disciplines at the national and international level. In other words, it is strongly recommended that the RatSWD focus on its strategic and long-term core tasks including the proposed extensions in terms of data types, scientific constituencies, and international scope rather than invest resources in capacity-building and teaching activities. More potently resourced actors in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences need to carry responsibility for capacity-building and teaching activities in this area. The RatSWD should attempt to identify such institutions willing to continue the programmes it started or otherwise discontinue its activities in this domain.

Two exceptions to this would be expert report competitions with clear strategic implications for the informational infrastructure (e.g., the one on a “Regional Consumer Price Index”) and the development of standards concerning the production and publication of public use files for academic teaching.

The above recommendation on refocusing the available resources is particularly pressing because the council currently works under the impression that it is insufficiently resourced to engage in increased outreach activities targeted at other disciplines that might have relevant data requirements. It is therefore mandatory that resources bound for capacity-building and teaching activities are expeditiously freed for such strategic higher priority goals.

II.6. Strategic Development of the Informational Infrastructure

The *KVI Updated* process is an important first step in the future development of the German informational infrastructure. It should allow identifying the gaps that still exist and thereby provide a sound footing for the RatSWD and other institutions to engage in future strategic planning both at the national and international level. Such a focused stock-taking exercise is needed, not least with respect to the European-level planning of research infrastructures in bodies such as the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI).

In the future, the RatSWD should be involved in such strategic planning processes in close cooperation with other relevant actors. The RatSWD's role in such a process has already been and should primarily be that of a lobbying organisation promoting the needs of scientific data users as well as data providers. Within this context, one crucial function of the council is to elicit proposals for new infrastructure developments from the scientific communities. However, to be able to fulfil this role convincingly, the RatSWD will need to broaden its constituency base. More disciplines in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences will need to be engaged.

II.7. Funding Relevant Infrastructure Projects

The RatSWD suggested becoming a funding institution for infrastructure projects in its own right. However, there is no need for an additional funding institution in that domain. Rather, the RatSWD should lobby for appropriate funding schemes within the BMBF, the DFG, and other funding bodies and act as a clearing-house, coordinator, and, if requested, evaluator of grant applications of relevant institutions within the informational infrastructure (such as RDCs).

II.8. Publications

The publication strategy of the council has been relatively expansive. Again, the priority of each resource-intensive publication activity has to be weighed against pursuing the core tasks of the RatSWD on the backdrop of limited resources. Therefore, publication efforts should be directly related to the core work areas. The RatSWD has taken first steps in this direction by splitting a new *Research Notes* series off its *RatSWD Working Papers* series. The *Research Notes* pre-print series publishes results of research using data available from the informational infrastructure that the

RatSWD facilitated. In contrast, the *RatSWD Working Papers* now fully focuses on conceptual and historical papers on the informational infrastructure available to the social, economic, and behavioural sciences. Whereas the latter series is clearly highly relevant to the core tasks of the RatSWD, this is not the case for the *Research Notes* series. This publication series should therefore be discontinued.

The criteria of only publishing items with strategic relevance to the informational infrastructure rather than manuscripts that merely report the use of data available within this infrastructure should also be applied to future monographs, edited volumes, and journals. The *European Data Watch* series of *Schmollers Jahrbuch* contains articles directly relevant to the national and European informational infrastructure and should, if possible, be further supported.

By focusing its publication strategy, the RatSWD should aim to become more visible as publisher of strategic documents concerning the full range of data relevant to the social, economic, and behavioural sciences.

II.9. Assessment of Success

The RatSWD should endeavour to assess both the direct benefits of its activities to the sciences and, as far as efficiently possible, the indirect benefits to society and within the domain of policy advice. The recent report on publications based on data provided by the RDCs is therefore welcomed. Proof of appropriate quality controls will be particularly relevant when applying for institutional funding.

B.III. Organisation and Resources

III.1. Composition and Election of the RatSWD

The RatSWD's election procedure and composition have generally proven appropriate and efficient. However, as suggested by the RatSWD, they need to be modified in the future to allow for a broader representation of both data providers and multidisciplinary data users. In particular, the number of seats should be changed from 12 to 16 with eight seats each for the data providers and data users. The RatSWD should also attempt to change the voting regulations in such a way that disciplinary representation is broadened and it becomes difficult or impossible for representatives of any one discipline to dominate the council. This will require changes in the voting procedure that might include reducing the number of votes each voter may cast.

In order to ensure sufficient continuity of the work of the council the term of office should be increased from two to three years. However, in contrast to the proposal of the RatSWD, re-election should continue to be possible only once (rather than twice) in order to attract a sufficient number of new members in each election round.

The council should establish stronger institutional ties with other bodies in the research and higher education sector with relevance to questions of the informational infrastructure. In some cases, the DFG in particular, the council should consider offering additional permanent seats to such organisations.

In response to the increasing demands placed on the two chairs of the council the provision of a full teaching-buyout for both the chair and the vice chair is strongly recommended. Otherwise, full university professors will not be able to fill these positions in an adequate manner.

The RatSWD's suggestion of founding a standing committee representing the RDCs and DSCs is supported. This organisational change might help to adequately address both the specific needs of the RDCs and DSCs (within the standing committee) and the need for discussions of strategic activities (in the council meetings) while keeping a strong connection between the two. However, there should not only be representation of the standing committee in the full council meetings but also, vice versa, the full council should be represented by scientific data users in the meetings of the standing committee.

III.2. Budget and Personnel

The current budget and staffing are roughly adequate, although the highly efficient business office is working at its limits. As a first step, the RatSWD should reallocate resources to match its priority goals. Initially, this should free up a modest amount of resources. If outreach activities are successful and if the council engages in increasing efforts to open up new areas for data access, a proportionate increase in financial and personnel resources would be needed. Increased strategic planning activities would also call for an adequate rise in resources, but could be provided on a project basis.

It is strongly recommended that the funding of the council by the BMBF be continued after the end of the current round of financing in early 2011. Discontinuation of fund-

ing would create a significant gap in the national informational infrastructure. Another funding period of six years is considered adequate in order (a) to ensure continuity of the current core activities, (b) to draft a new mission statement and to refocus future activities in line with the present recommendations, and (c) to develop an organisational model and a clear institutional perspective. The council should hold discussions with other relevant bodies in the research and higher education system and should present a proposal for a long-term institutional arrangement after four years of renewed funding. The search for an appropriate institutional arrangement should be open-ended. However, the decisive criteria for any institutional arrangement should be that the new mission statement of the council can be optimally fulfilled. Should the RatSWD be continued as an independent body, a broader mandate (possibly an appointment by the whole German Federal Government) should be sought to ensure that the recommendations of the RatSWD are perceived as sufficiently binding.

III.3. Premises and Facilities

Although the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) has reportedly made no attempts to influence the work of the RatSWD in the past, the location within the premises of the DIW is not ideal due to the possible impression of a lack of independence. In the process of finding institutional funding, the RatSWD should relocate to a more neutral setting that avoids the impression of possible influence of one particular institution. In order to retain the staff of the business office and to have access to political actors and the Berlin research institutions, the new location should ideally also be in Berlin.

B.IV. Summary

The RatSWD has successfully achieved many of the goals set out in the KVI report. Particularly remarkable progress has been made in increasing the accessibility of official statistical data. The council has also shown considerable activity in suggesting relevant research infrastructure projects for funding and has taken first steps in compiling a systematic appraisal of the German informational infrastructure in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences. Further, it has provided a platform for discussions between data providers and scientific data users that allowed for significant advancements concerning the quality of social and economic data.

Now that some of the original tasks have been fully or partly achieved, the RatSWD should define its future core work areas and set these down in a new mission statement. This statement should make a clear distinction between primary strategic functions and secondary derived tasks which should be reflected in the use of financial and personnel resources.

In the area of data access, the RatSWD should continue its highly successful efforts aimed at ensuring quick, user-friendly, nondiscriminatory, nonexclusive, and affordable data access. The council needs to prepare for an increased number of future RDCs for which it should strive to retain its position as a discussion platform, clearing-house, and evaluator. In coordination with other relevant bodies the council also has an important role to play in developing viable suggestions for the future of DSCs.

The RatSWD not only needs to remain flexible and open with regard to the data requirements of social, economic, and behavioural scientists but should urgently increase its efforts to actively query the respective communities about such needs. Amongst possible areas of future action are the domains of qualitative data, public-health data, transaction data, data from economic research institutions, geo-coded data, and data relevant to educational research and psychology.

The RatSWD has successfully established itself as a scientific advisory body to ministries. This is particularly relevant in the planning stages of large-scale public data collection efforts such as the Census 2011. The council can play a critical role in ensuring that the data collected meet scientific requirements. Besides its formal advisory role, the RatSWD also influences data quality by setting informal standards. There now is an established expectation that data collected using public funds should be available to (other) scientists for analysis.

The council should adopt a more active strategy on the international level. In particular, it should work for increasing availability of EU microdata and should monitor relevant policy initiatives. Besides representing the interests of German data providers and scientific data users, it should contribute to developments regarding European research infrastructures in the social sciences and be instrumental in identifying newly arising needs in this area. It should consider adopting a more widely memorable acronym for its international activities.

The recent expansion of activities in the areas of capacity-building and teaching is problematic considering the reported lack of resources to fulfil higher priority goals. The RatSWD should discontinue activities in this domain which do not have clear strategic implications. Similarly, the council should sharpen the profile of its rather expansive publication portfolio by only publishing items with strategic relevance to the development of the informational infrastructure.

Instead, the council should increase its efforts to participate in strategic planning processes concerning the informational infrastructure in close cooperation with other relevant actors. Its role in such a process should not be that of a funding organisation but primarily that of a lobbying organisation promoting the needs of scientific data users as well as data providers. However, to be able to fulfil this role convincingly, the RatSWD must broaden its constituency base to include further disciplines in the social, economic, and behavioural sciences.

To allow for such broader representation of both data providers and multidisciplinary data users, the RatSWD's election procedure and composition should be modified. The term of office should be increased from two to three years with one possible re-election. The two chairs of the council should be freed from teaching obligations.

To adequately address both the specific needs of the RDCs and DSCs and the need for discussions of strategic activities the establishment of a standing committee for the RDCs and DSCs is supported. In addition, the council should establish stronger institutional ties with other bodies in the research and higher education sector with relevance to questions of the informational infrastructure and, in some cases, should consider offering additional permanent seats to such organisations.

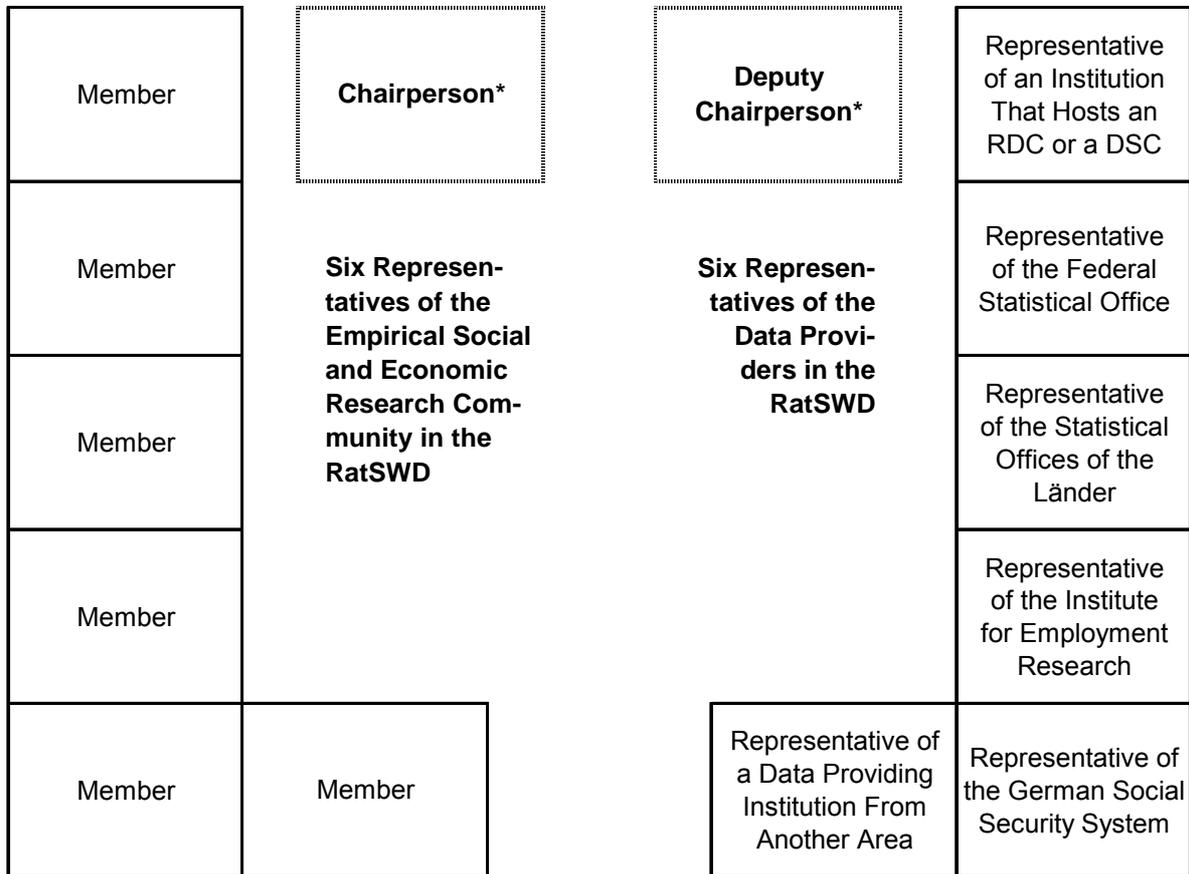
The current budget and staffing are generally considered adequate. However, additional future tasks will require a proportionate increase in financial and personnel resources. It is strongly recommended that the funding of the council by the BMBF be continued after the end of the current round of financing in early 2011. Within the new funding period, the council should hold open-ended discussions with other bodies in the research and higher education system and should present a proposal for a long-term institutional arrangement after four years of renewed funding. Should the RatSWD be continued as an independent institution, it should relocate to a more

neutral setting than can be provided by the DIW Berlin. In this case, a broader political mandate would also be appropriate and necessary.

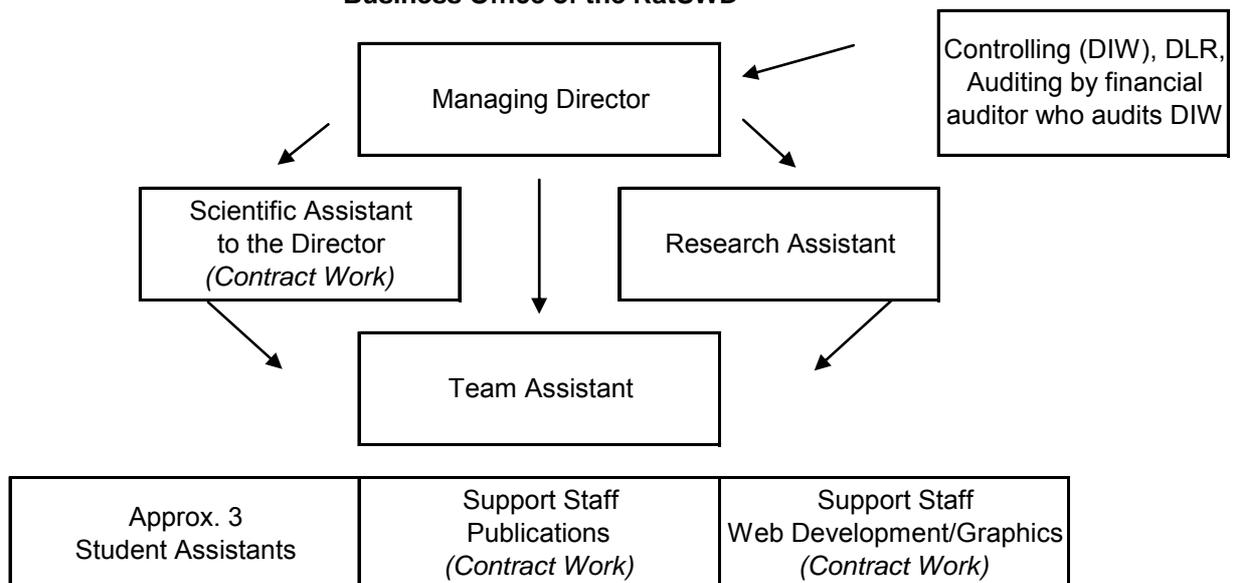
Appendices

Appendix 1 Organisational Chart of the German Council for Social and Economic Data

Members of the RatSWD



Business Office of the RatSWD



* The RatSWD chooses one chairperson and one deputy chairperson from among all of its members.

Appendix 2 Personnel Chart of the Business Office of the German Council for Social and Economic Data

Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)

Reference date: 01 January 2009

Staff Categories	Level of Positions (Pay Scale)	Total Number of Positions (Target)	Positions Filled (Actual)
Scientific Staff	Managing Director (BAT Ib)	1 (40 hours/week)	1
	Research Assistant (BAT IIa)	0.62 (25 hours/week)	0.62
Subtotal		1.62	1.62
Nonacademic/ Support Staff	Team Assistant (BAT VII)	0.62 (25 hours/week)	0.62
	Student Assistants	1.5 (3 x 19 hours/week)	1.5
Subtotal		2.12	2.12
Total		3.74	3.74

Number of Staff

Staff Categories	Institutional Funding	Third-Party Funding	Total
Scientists	2 (+ 1*)	-	2 (+ 1*)
Doctoral Students	-	-	-
Nonacademic/ Support Staff	1 (+ 2* + 3**)	-	1 (+ 2* + 3**)
Total	3 (+ 6)	-	3 (+ 6)

* Three contract workers currently work for the RatSWD business office: one Scientific Assistant (approx. 16 hours/week) and two nonacademic support staff (web development/graphics, approx. 15 hours/week; publication assistant, approx. 8 hours/week). - ** Student Assistants.

Source: German Council for Social and Economic Data

Appendix 3 Documents Submitted by the German Council for Social and Economic Data

- Answers to the questionnaire of the German Council of Science and Humanities
- Brief outline of the history of the institution
- Organization chart
- Statement of the funding goals/mission statement
- Election regulations
- List of subject-specific professional associations that are/are not eligible to propose scientific representatives of the RatSWD
- Budget details
- Annual report
- Job chart
- List of publications
- List of workshops and conferences
- List of expert hearings and consultations
- List of all present and past members of the RatSWD
- Minutes of the last three meetings of the RatSWD
- List of meetings of the RatSWD
- Election results of 2008 and 2006
- CVs of all current and past members of the RatSWD
- Activities of council members in national and international decision-making bodies
- List of research policy advice provided by the RatSWD
- List of press releases
- Criteria for the research data infrastructure
- Developing the Research Infrastructure for the Social and Behavioral Sciences in Germany and Beyond: Progress Since 2001, Current Situation, and Future Demands: Project Description
- Project description, list of expert reports, and programme of workshop of the project “Developing the Research Infrastructure for the Social and Behavioral Sciences in Germany and Beyond: Progress Since 2001, Current Situation, and Future Demands”
- Guidelines for the promotion and support of young scholars

- Report on the workshop “RatSWD Nachwuchsförderung: Analytical Potentials of the Socio-Economic Panel” at the University of Duisburg-Essen
- List of expert report competitions
- Description of RatSWD teaching module on data protection and research ethics
- Programme of the 4th Conference of Social and Economic Data
- Programme of RatSWD_Dialog workshop: “Dialog between academic and official statistics on the scope of official household samples in Germany”
- Description of RatSWD Working Papers series
- List of RatSWD Working Papers
- RatSWD Working Paper No. 50
- Description of Schmollers Jahrbuch
- Brochure “Tasks, Activities, Members”

Documents submitted separately:

- Revised election regulations
- Answers to questions 30 and 31 of the questionnaire
- Rules of internal procedure
- Criteria for reviewing project proposals (adapted from the WGL guidelines)
- “DatenNutzen” 2009 – Report on the use of data provided by the Research Data Centers and the Data Service Centers to the Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD)
- List of publications of the Research Data Centers; List of institutions requesting data access

List of Abbreviations

ALLBUS Allg	emeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften/German General Social Survey
BBR	Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung/Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning
BiBB	Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung/Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung/German Federal Ministry of Education and Research
BSH	Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie/Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany
CESSDA	Council of European Social Science Data Archives
DDI	Data Documentation Initiative
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft/German Research Foundation
DIW	Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung/German Institute for Economic Research
DJI Deutsches	Jugendinstitut/German Youth Institute
DSC	Datenservicezentrum/Data Service Center
DWD Deutscher	Wetterdienst
DZA	Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen/German Centre of Gerontology
ESFRI	Europäisches Strategieforum für Forschungsinfrastrukturen/European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures
GESIS	Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften/Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences
GML	German Microdata Lab

HIS Hochschul-Information	s-System/Higher Education Information System
IAB	Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung/Institute for Employment Research
IAW	Institut für Angewandte Wirtschaftsforschung/Institute for Applied Economic Research
INSPIRE	Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe
IQB Institut	zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen/Institute for Educational Progress
IZA	Institut zur Zukunft der Arbeit/Institute for the Study of Labor
KSWD	Konferenz für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten/Conference for Social and Economic Data
KVI	Kommission zur Verbesserung der informationellen Infrastruktur zwischen Wissenschaft und Statistik/Commission to Improve the Statistical Infrastructure in Cooperation with the Scientific Community and Official Statistics
MPG	Max-Planck-Gesellschaft/Max Planck Society
OECD	Organisation für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RatSWD	Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten/German Council for Social and Economic Data
RDC Forschungsdatenzentrum/	Research Data Center
SOEP Sozio-oek	onomisches Panel/German Socio-Economic Panel Study
WGL Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft	Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz/Leibniz Association
WZB	Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung/Social Science Research Center Berlin

ZEW Zentrum für Europäische Wirtschaftsforschung/Centre for European
Economic Research